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AMERICAN COCKROACHES IN THE OFFICE

Let us salute the American cockroach. These are the roaches that really make you sit up and take notice. These are the ones with license plates. The ones you put saddles on. At over an inch and a half long, a full grown American cockroach is the size of a small mouse. It's no wonder that "find the biggest cockroach" contests have become so popular. Whether they're called "water bugs" or "palmetto bugs," American cockroaches just naturally seem to grab people's attention.

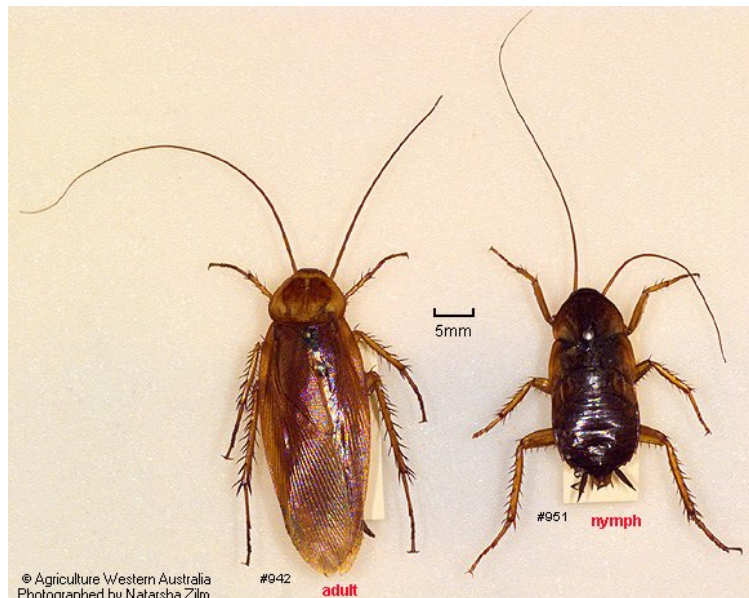
Not only are these bugs big, they're fast. And if they're warm enough, they can even fly for short distances. Unchanged in appearance for 300 million years, their flat, streamlined bodies are one of the most successful shapes in the history of life. Despite their size, they can easily hide, reside, and roam through places that are much too narrow and tight for many other creatures.

How good are they at what they do? In 1985, an adult male American cockroach was captured far, far from home by the Space Lab III mission crew. If it only took a couple of decades of space travel before one of these industrial-strength roaches figured out how to climb aboard, what do you think that says about your office building?

Understanding the Beast

The American cockroach may be one of the ultimate survivors, but an intelligent pest management program can keep its survivorship to a minimum. To successfully control the wily water bug, it's important to remember why they're called that in the first place: they need more moisture than the smaller roach species.

For this reason, American cockroaches live mainly at ground level or below, although they may also be found in warm, damp spots far above the ground. Vast hordes of them scuttle through sewer systems, invading basements through drains and foundation cracks. They cluster in the wall voids around pipe fixtures and often infest storage areas. In warm weather, a few restless adults will always wander upwards along the pipes and pop out in the darndest spots. It's been scientifically proven that one adventurous water bug emerging in a seventh floor restroom is guaranteed to startle at least three branch chiefs and a division director before it is finally stomped by an enraged deputy administrator who demands that the restroom be sprayed.



Colossal Cockroach Control

Like most other types of pest control, American cockroach reduction depends on a little pesticide in the right places to kill existing infestations, and a lot more work to change those places so that future infestations will be prevented. Spraying a restroom because a large bug was seen there is like painting a wall to get rid of your shadow.

1. **Cleaning (Sanitation!)**

It should be obvious that any sort of food residue inside a building is potential pest food. Reducing clutter is also critical for American cockroach control. Piled boxes and cartons, rolled carpeting, and other stored junk, especially in damp areas, all act as water bug magnets. Corrugated cardboard packaging is one of man's great gifts to the roach. The more of it that can be eliminated from the workplace, the fewer roaches there will be.

2. **Drying (Repair leaks!)**

Eliminating moisture where it doesn't belong is easier said than done, but it's one of the most effective ways to eliminate American cockroaches on a long-term basis. They simply cannot survive where it's dry, and they avoid areas with an airflow. Fixing leaks, installing vents, and improving drainage are guaranteed to have results.

3. **Sealing (Exclusion!)**

One way to swiftly deal with marauding water bugs in a restroom is to caulk or grout around the fixtures where they're coming in. Another place to concentrate sealing efforts are basement floor drains, which serve both as access points for the creatures coming from below and as a water source for those that are already above. Fitting these drains with screens or basket inserts is a standard anti-water bug procedure.

4. **Baiting**

Modern, safe pesticide treatment for cockroaches involves the use of baits more than sprays. These baits are applied in the secluded places where the majority of bugs are living and breeding, not in the exposed areas where isolated individuals have happened to wander. American cockroach treatment should focus on selected basement space, boiler rooms, tunnels, crawlspaces, pipe chases, sump pumps, elevator and sewer access shafts, etc. The presence of smaller, immature roaches is a sure sign that you have located a breeding area.

Contact your facility's IPM (Integrated Pest Management) Coordinator for assistance.